

critical digest

Vol. II No. 29

May 8, 1950

The Weekly That Keeps You Informed of the Current Broadway Critical Scene

The Liar-Broadhurst, 5/11/50. Musical by Alfred Drake and Edward Eager, score by John Mundy, based on 1760 comedy by Goldoni. William Eythe, Melville Cooper and Paula Laurence head cast, staged by Norris Houghton. Produced by Dorothy Willard and Thomas Hammond.

Daily Reviewers Look at the New Shows

Brigadoon-City Center, 5/2/50. Three years and 20,000 miles later the critics still like the Alan Jay Lerner fantasy. Leads Phil Hanne and Virginia Oswald shared top billing with dance numbers of Agnes de Mille. Atkinson, Times, and Bazar, Music Critic of World Telegram and Sun, cheered the beautiful work of art that is held together by de Mille's genius. Coleman, Mirror, billed it as a "modern classic"; while Chapman, News, thinks charm is in Scottish fantasy being "pleasant" not "smart". All recommended it for second visit to those who saw it before. Producer Cheryl Crawford was complimented for keeping it in the best of taste.

Tickets Please-Coronet, 4/27/50. Hartmans triumphed over their new revue. Most of daily critics welcomed the dance team back as the masters of intimate entertainment, but Field, Newark News, thought the lack lustre performances and material were too much for them to overcome. Rest of the 14 critics were reserved in their praise. Little, amiable, unpretentious were the key words. Watts, Post, objected to one "repulsive" song, but went along with the majority. Garland, Journal American, deemed the team the "Lunt & Fontanne" of the song and dance world.

Shows That Closed

The Velvet Glove-Golden, 12/26/49-4/6/50. Fine acting by Grace George and Walter Hampden, not the script by Rosemary Casey, were the items praised by exactly half of the 30 critics rated. Sharp "Con" reviews were filed by critics of Herald Tribune, Compass, George Jean Nathan, Variety, Theatre Arts, Cue, Time and New Yorker.

Great To Be Alive-Winter Garden, 3/23/50-4/6/50. Daily critics split their votes on Vinton Freedley musical, though Valerie Betti's dancing drew raves from all. Most of the weekly critics panned show. General opinion was that every one worked hard, but nothing came of it. Many objected to mixing of ghosts in their musicals.

Magazine Critics Rate the Plays

Peter Pan-Imperial, 4/24/50. Gibbs, New Yorker, is first critic to pan Peter. The Barrie classic lost most of its magic, it requires too much indulgence for those over age ten. Several of the weekly critics thought the Bernstein music and the male ballet slowed up the proceedings. Hatch, subbing for the Paris-bound Clurman in New Republic, enjoyed the revival; but he termed the settings jocos in the Disney toadstool manner and the mermaids from Minsky. Morehouse, WTAS, felt Marcia Henderson flow away with the show, though all others praised Jean Arthur and Boris Karloff in the leads. Critics of Cue, Newsweek and Time were enchanted, though latter thought parts were too syrupy.

A Phoenix Too Frequent and Freight-Fulton, 4/26/50-4/29/50. Wide difference of opinion on acting and direction in the Fry Phoenix. Critics thought playlet had few bright moments, but not enough action or plot. Kenneth White's Freight was praised by critics of Newsweek and Billboard; panned by others.

The Wisteria Troop-Martin Beck, 3/29/50. Phelan, Commonwealth, sees no excuse for Helen Hayes to act in, or for Joshua Logan to write a new version of Chekhov's "The Cherry Orchard." She should have tried the original instead.

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' The Green Room Department '
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IDEAS OF THE WEEK...Garland, Journal American, advice to "the next good New York newspaperman who dies to become a drama critic" is to retreat to Mary Martin's dressing room at the Majestic to study the paintings of famous theatre people she has collected...Bring all the high spots of the hit shows to the Waldorf for a program beginning at midnight, continues to be the favorite dream of Morehouse WT&S...T.S.Eliot should study drama, Nathan, American Mercury retorts. Author had commented that critics didn't understand poetical dramas like The Cocktail Party. Nathan says it's vice versa.

HAIR & HITS...Mary Martin, Julie Harris and Jean Arthur have become stars this season in parts calling for extra short haircuts. Bolton, Morning Telegraph, thinks a wise barber could clean up if he put a sign in his window reading "Shave Your Head and Become A Star"...By the time the public is able to buy an aisle seat to South Pacific, Mary Martin may be able to let her locks sprout a bit and take over the male lead; quipped Ruark, WT&S.

BOX OFFICE MANNERS...Lee Tracy, WOR Theatrical Page, urges his listeners to report by name and theatre the box office men who are rude to them. He will turn the information over to the management. Star objects violently to the few treasurers who refuse to answer simple questions civilly.

NATHAN PICKS...Bests of the season picked by George Jean Nathan includes: Come Back, Little Sheba, The Enchanted, The Consul, Touch and Go. Cedric Hardwicke and Lilli Palmer, Peter Glenville, Robert Lewis and Jo Mielziner. Worst of the season includes: With a Silk Thread, Cry of the Peacock, Miss Liberty and Ken Murray's Blackouts. Raymond Massey, Martha Scott were picked as worst actors, Elsa She lloy as worst stage director.

PETER PAN FANS...Hopalong Cassidy was warned in a friendly letter from Rice, Post, to realize that many of his fans, dressed in hat, suit and gun, are surrendering to the charms of Peter Pan. He suggested Hoppy look into the flying racket if he wants to retain his following..."Tinker Bell for president of the UN" is the slogan Phillips, WT&S, offers to promote peace. Global road companies of Peter Pan will do the job. If the Russians can walk out on Tinker Bell, then they aren't worth saving.

AUDIENCE REVIEWED...There is no excuse for Broadway latecomers, Alec Guinness, The Cocktail Party, told Variety. Fault of London playgoers is the drinking and rattling of toacups, while New Yorkers have no respect for curtain times...John Sherman, Minneapolis Star drama critic, rapped the citizens of his town for not patronizing Madwoman of Cheillot. If they refuse to attend such fine plays, the town will be considered as a whistle stop.

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' Random Items '
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Charade team from The Velvet Glove have won seven Sundays in a row on WNET Say It With Acting...Columbia University has authorized the plans for a TV program called "Pulitzer Prize Playhouse", featuring adaptations of winners...Pulitzer Prize officials announced that award to South Pacific was meant to honor Joshua Logan as well as Rodgers and Hammerstine...Herald Tribune offers course of 15 lectures for NY teachers on arts. Paper's drama and movie critics will lecture. Cedrick Hardwicke told group that teachers can instill enthusiasm for theatre in students by getting them to participate in school productions...Ray Bolger, Where's Charley? star, devoted curtain speech to praise Peter Pan...John D. MacArthur, publisher of Theatre Arts, has resigned his position from an Illinois bank to assume full time duties.

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' Off Broadway '
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Pollock, Compass, spent a busy week playgoing off Broadway. John F. Matthews The Scapegoat, fashioned from Kafka's "The Trial" and produced by Dramatic Workshop, was billed as a play of stature. It was especially recommended to those who are not content with the ordinary. Paul Green's Tread the Green Grass, put on by the Abbe Practical Theatre was not up to Green's high standards, he commented; while he viewed Herb Tank's Longitude 49 a powerful play, well acted, well presented...Variety reporter didn't think much of Stacey Hill's And So They Perish, produced at Hudson Guild Theatre, he considered the dialogue forceless...Garland, Journal American, is convinced that the best way to see William Saroyan's Sam Ego's House is in a dark theatre with the curtain down. He saw it on the West Coast done in conventional manner, and now he has seen it produced at Fordham in arena style. Slovenly in thinking and writing, phony and pretentious.

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' Interview Round Up '
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THE HARTMANS...There is no way to tell if a show is going over until the curtain goes up, then you find out in the first four minutes if the audience is for or against you, Paul and Grace Hartman, Tickets Please, admitted to WNBC Mary Margaret McBride. Their present revue was written and rewritten many times before the opening, the ballet number was finished three days before the opening.

ALFRED DRAKE...Star of Kiss Me, Kate and co-author of The Liar has been leading a busy life, Morehouse, WT&S, discovered. Acting in the musical eight times a week in New York, he has been going down to Philadelphia every night to work until 5:00 A.M. on The Liar, returning late the following afternoon. He can recite the Pennsy diner menu. Drake, who leaves Kiss Me, Kate on June 3rd, is off for a European vacation, then he would like to do a straight play. Some day Hamlet.

GENE LOCKHART...The audience works twice as hard as the cast, the star of Doath of a Salesman, told Hawkins, WT&S. Though he will be replaced this week by Albert Dekker in the title role, Lockhart enjoyed the part. The chore was to keep punching yet not appear to be. The success of the play, he feels, is largely a matter of universal association.

MRS. EZIO PINZA...Dancer wife of star of South Pacific is responsible for his leaving the opera to become an actor, reports Field, Mirror. Two plodges keep them happily married, they tell each other everything, and she reads his mail.

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' Key to NYC Criticism at a Glance '
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Shows are rated as to how the critics liked them, not if they think they will be hits. "So-So" means the critic did not state directly if he recommended the show for an entertaining or stimulating evening. Photostats of reviews may be obtained at 25 cents each to subscribers, 50 cents each to others.

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| 1. NY Times | 11. Newark News | 21. Catholic World |
| 2. NY Herald Tribune | 12. Women's Wear Daily | 22. Commonweal |
| 3. NY News | 13. Daily Worker | 23. Cue |
| 4. NY Mirror | 14. Wall Street Journal | 24. Chr.Sci.Monitor |
| 5. NY Compass (Star, PM) | 15. Journal of Commerce | 25. Sat.Review Lit. |
| 6. NY Post | 16. George Jean Nathan | 26. Newsweek |
| 7. NY Sun (Morehouse) | 17. Morning Telegraph | 27. Time |
| 8. NY Journal American | 18. Variety | 28. Nation |
| 9. NY World Telegram & Sun | 19. Billboard | 29. New Republic |
| 10. Brooklyn Eagle | 20. Theatre Arts | 30. New Yorker |

Arms and the Girl-46th Street, 2/2/50. Pro: 3-4-5-10-11-12-14-15-17-19-23-24-30
Con: 1-7-8-16-18-20-29. So-So: 2-6-9-26-27.

As You Like It-Cort, 1/26/50. Pro: 3-4-6-7-9-10-11-12-16-17-18-19-20-22-26-29.
Con: 1-2-23-24-25-27-30. So-So: 5-8-14-28.

Clutterbuck-Biltmore, 12/3/49. Pro: 3-5-6-7-8-12-15-17-19-20-21-23-27-30.
Con: 1-9-11-13-16-18-22-24-26-28-29. So-So: 2-4-10-14.

The Cocktail Party-Miller, 1/2/50. Pro: 2-3-4-5-6-7-8-10-11-12-15-17-18-19-20-23
24-26-27-28. Con: 1-9-14-22-25-29. So-So: 16-30.

Come Back, Little Sheba-Booth, 2/15/50. Pro: 1-5-8-9-10-11-14-16-17-18-19-20-22
23-26-29. Con: 2-4-7-12-27. So-So: 3-6-30.

The Consul-Barrymore, 3/15/50. Pro: 25 votes. Con: 22. So-So: 6-29. Nonc: 20-21.

Death of a Salesman-Morosco, 2/10/49. Pro: 28 votes. Con: 29. So-So: 27.

Detective Story-Hudson, 3/23/49. Pro: 1-2-3-4-6-7-8-9-12-14-15-17-18-19-20-21-22
23-26-27-30.

The Devil's Disciple-Royal, 2/21/50. Pro: 1-2-3-4-5-6-8-9-10-11-12-18-19-20-22
23-24-27-29. Con: 30. So-So: 16.

Gentlemen Prefer Blondes- Ziegfeld, 12/8/49. Pro: 21 votes. Con: 6-21-28.
So-So: 16-22-27. Nonc: 25.

The Happy Time-Plymouth, 1/24/50. Pro: 20 votes. Con: 5-6-7-20-26-27-28-30.
Nonc: 13-21.

I Know My Love-Shubert, 11/14/49. Pro: 21 votes. Con: 1-5-16-20-22-27-29-30.
Nonc: 13.

The Innocents-Playhouse, 2/1/50. Pro: 24 votes. Con: 2-4-28-29-30. Nonc: 21.

Kiss Me, Kate-Century, 12/31/48. Pro: 28 votes. Con: 29. Nonc: 28.

Lost in the Stars-Music Box, 10/30/49. Pro: 1-2-3-5-6-7-10-11-12-14-15-17-18-19-
23-26. Con: 8-9-13-20-21-22-24-25-28-29-30. So-So: 4-27.

The Member of the Wedding-Empire, 1/5/50. Pro: 25 votes. Con: 16. So-So: 2-27-30

Mister Roberts-Alvin, 2/13/48. Pro: 24 votes. Con: 21-24. So-So: 13-16-17.

Peter Pan-Imperial, 4/24/50. Pro: 1-2-3-4-5-9-10-11-12-15-17-18.

South Pacific-Majestic, 4/8/49. Pro: 1-2-3-4-6-7-8-9-12-15-17-18-19-20-21-24-25-
26-30. Con: 27. So-So: 23.

Texas Li'l Darlin'-Hollinger, 11/25/49. Pro: 3-6-9-12-13-14-15-16-17-21-22-24-
Con: 1-4-7-8-18-19-23-29-30. So-So: 2-5-10-11-20-26-27.

Where's Charley-St. James, 10/11/48. Pro: 16 votes. Con: 6-7-12-13-16-19-22-24-
25-26. So-So: 4-27.

The Wisteria Trees-Martin Beck, 3/29/50. Pro: 1-3-4-5-6-11-12-14-15-17-19-24.
Con: 2-7-9-10-16-23-25-26-27-28-30. So-So: 18-29.

